DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 074 SO 024 105

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TITLE From a Politics of Self-Interest to a Multiculturally-Based Politics of Needs.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Washington, DC, September 2-5, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *Group Behavior; Individualism; *Multicultural Education; *Philosophy; Political Attitudes; *Political Science; Politics of Education
IDENTIFIERS Locke (John)

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates that the problem of a theory of politics based on self-interest is that it squelches diversity behind a mask of "the common good" that results in a theoretical justification of inequality. Through philosophical critique, this paper presents the case for a move from a politics of self-interest toward a multiculturally-based politics of needs. The first part of the paper analyzes the roots of the assumption of self-interest in contemporary group theory. To this end, an analysis of traditional liberal philosophy is provided in order to unmask the notion of the "common good," that can be set apart from and opposed to private interests, as a mythic construction of the particular interests of some, called upon to justify the stifling of others. Such an analysis demonstrates the inegalitarian bias inherent in group theory's assumption of narrowly self-interested groups at odds with the public good. The leap from humans seeking to fulfill benign and uncontestable needs to the hierarchically organized protection of a class of private property owners is the Hobbesian paradigm, where fear of difference and the need to suppress it are made more explicit. The second part of this paper demonstrates specifically how, through a bourgeois process of commodification, legitimate and concrete needs come to be understood in abstract terms as interests. As educators seek to develop multicultural education, the experience of those excluded and oppressed in the current system based in sameness and fear of difference can be used to develop a curriculum that actively encourages diversity. Contains 55 references. (DK)

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ED 378 074

From a Politics of Self-Interest to a Multiculturally-Based Politics of Needs

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By faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

James Madison
The Federalist Papers

Contemporary group theory tends to understand political groups as Madison understood factions,[1] they represent "interests" which are seen as inherently parochial and anti-social (Bentley, 1908; Truman, 1951; Latham, 1965; Hershey and Levine and Thurber in Cigler and Loomis eds, 1986; Aberbach and Rockman, 1978; and Fritschler, 1983).[2] Thus, Jeffrey Berry opens his work on The Interest Group Society, with the following observation: "people will pursue their self-interest even though the policies they advocate may hurt others, and may not be in the best interest of the nation" (1984, 1). This paper will demonstrate that the problem of a theory of politics based on self-interest is that it squelches diversity behind a mask of "the common good" supposed to transcend our "particulars" and results in a politics, and theoretical justification, of inequality.[3] Through philosophical critique, this paper will present the case for a move from a politics of self-interest toward a multiculturally-based politics of needs.

The first part of this paper will analyze the roots of the assumption of self-interest in contemporary group theory. To this end, an analysis of traditional Liberal philosophy will be provided in order to unmask the notion of the "common good"--that can be set apart from and opposed to private interests--as a mythic construction of the particular interests of some, called upon to justify the stifling of others. Such an analysis will demonstrate the inegalitarian bias inherent in group theory's assumption of narrowly self-interested groups at odds with the public good. This first section will explore how it is that John Locke can open The Second Treatise on Government with a vision of individuals innocently picking up acorns and eating them to satisfy their hunger, in a world where there is always as much and good enough for others, and yet end the work with a justification for the vast inequalities of capitalism. We will see that this strange leap in The Second Treatise, from humans seeking to fulfill benign and uncontestable needs to the hierarchically organized protection of a class of private property owners, must be understood in terms of the Hobbesian paradigm, where fear of difference and the need to suppress it are made more explicit.

The second part of this work will demonstrate specifically how, through a bourgeois process of commodification, our legitimate and concrete "needs" come to be understood in abstract terms as "interests."[4] We will see that by relying on this abstract version of needs--in the context of a theory blind to diversity--contemporary group theory is able to justify the subordination of

some need claims, and can then gloss over fundamental inequalities within our system.

Part One

The Common Good: Difference and Group Theory

James Madison and other Federalists attended to a certain level of diversity in order to derive the support necessary to establish the new form of democracy that came to take its shape as the United States. In the Federalist Papers,[5] Madison explicitly addresses various levels of geographical diversity and class antagonisms. The Madisonian attention to difference, however, was actually extremely limited. The range of classes of concern, for example, extended from merchants, to farmers and artisans: all merely variations in what may be called the ruling class of the time. Despite the self conscious existence of many different non-dominant groups,[6] from the earliest days of the Republic it was felt by those in power that such diversity was a threat to the political order (Herzog 1986, 484). Madison and the other "founding fathers" grounded our system in a vision of homogeneity that ignored and stifled diversity under the pretense of protecting the general interest.[7] This emphasis on sameness is due, in part, to the Madisonian tendency to translate a "diversity of needs" into a notion of "conflicting interest at odds with the public good" (Truman 1951, 57; Salisbury 1969, 3-4; J.Q. Wilson 1973, 154; Greenwald 1977, 305). The supposed egalitarianism of Liberal democracy is actually achieved through this reliance on sameness, which in fact ends up ignoring difference relevant to most of the populous. The consequences of a political process which ignores this difference is that it translates in practice into the subordination of, for example, women and other non-dominant groups by stifling their voices in the construction of the public discourse.[8]

Take, for example, the writings of Benjamin Rush, signer of the American Declaration of Independence and prolific writer on various social issues of his day. As Herzog (1986) points out, Rush suggested that the "different" qualities of Blacks were the results of a disease, namely leprosy. Their "disease" included both physical "defects" such as "woolly hair" and the like, as well as their "superhuman sexuality." Herzog comments, "[L]ike other colonial republicans, [Rush] worried that a racially heterogeneous community might never become a politically unified one" (1986, 484). Thus, *while* African-Americans were "different" they were not merely disenfranchised, but lived as slaves. Rush's solution to the miserable condition of these people, and towards a better political system, was to "cure" Blacks of their disease/difference from a white standard. It was only in the hopes of their being "cured" that he suggested African-Americans might ever become affirmed and participate constructively in American politics.[9]

The tendency of group theory in the United States--since the colonial period--to call on the populace to give up their

particulars in the service of the common good comes directly from classical Liberal theory. Liberal philosophy has long posited that individual interests are narrow and selfish. In The Second Treatise, Locke wrote that "men are biased in their interests" (1980, 66), and even Rousseau felt, as he wrote in the Social Contract, that "the particular will tend, by its very nature, to partiality, while the general will tends to equality" (1973, 182). From the notion, as Locke quotes from Hooker, "that the interest of everyman is toward himself... and therefore that strife and troubles would be endless" (1980, 48), Liberal philosophy has claimed the "narrowness of party" (ibid, 26) and its threat to the common-wealth.

We must now explore prior assumptions, made of a Liberal world view, that generate and support this notion of narrow selfish interest as the basis of political community. Closer attention to the role of fear, in this case the fear of difference as it relates to a Liberal conception of the self, will expose the narrow self-interested group as assumed by contemporary group theory. With this in mind, we will turn more directly to the self-proclaimed ends of Liberal philosophy to shed light on how the myth gets constructed that particular interests contradict those of the whole. In doing so, we will find a prime example of Rousseau's bitingly suggestive remark from the Social Contract about, "the conjuring tricks of our political theorists...they first dismember the body politic by an illusion worthy of a fair, and then join it together again we do not know how" (1973, 183).

Narrow Self-Interest and the Fear of Difference in Liberal Thought:

On what basis does Liberal philosophy assume men to be narrowly self-interested? Hobbesian philosophy is based in fear generally,[10] and fear of difference specifically. Although it is common to attribute individualism to Liberal philosophy, it is not necessarily true that the homage paid to individuals in this tradition translates into a respect for a true individualism that acknowledges the integrity of each of us in our difference. Actually, behind the commonly understood "individualism" of Liberal thought, we find an acknowledgement more of sameness, and a fear of true difference. As the following discussion will demonstrate, it is this fear of difference, embedded in the foundation of Liberal thought, which creates the context within which individuals and groups are forced to be narrowly self-interested.

Liberalism has often been criticized, for example, by women, Jews, Marxists and people of color, for recognizing the humanity of only a certain class of people, namely able, propertied white Christian adult males. One might say that Locke could only see in terms of other English country gentlemen like himself: others are not truly seen in the same terms, and are not involved in the social compact. Difference, from this type of male standard, is seen not as benign or exciting,[11] but as mutation. These mutants are seen as either too much trouble to worry about, or as threatening, in the case for example of those with too much passion (a description often applied to non-dominant groups). Those not

rational are deemed mad or unfit for the responsibility of civic participation (Hobbes 1983, 140). Despite the pretense to a "universal" consent and protection, people such as women, servants, slaves, foreigners (ie. Jews and other peoples of color) and children are expressly excluded.[12]

The Liberal man fears "them," excludes "them," and sets up his commonwealth to protect himself against "them." Thus, one who cannot "accommodate himself to the rest," according to Hobbes, "is to be left out, or cast out of Society, as cumbersome thereunto" (ibid, 209). As it is in women's and other inferior beings' somehow inherent nature to be different, they of course will not be able to "accommodate" themselves to a male standard. It is our lot, then to be "cast out" from the deliberative space of the community.

Benhabib[13] shows us that the Liberal view which uses universal language only sees as far as our sameness.[14] Summing up a Kantian vision of the "generalized other," Benhabib writes that by basing relation in formal terms, "I confirm in your person the rights of humanity and I have a legitimate claim to expect that you will do the same in relation to me" (1987, 87). The bias in favor of sameness, and the avoidance and--more importantly--the actual exclusion of the legitimacy or contribution of difference is made clearer when such an approach is compared to a feminist alternative to the Kantian other, which Benhabib refers to as the "concrete other."

Benhabib describes the feminist approach as one in which

> each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other forms of behavior through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents and capacities (ibid, 87).

Benhabib's conception of the concrete other is an example of her assertion of "interactive" universals. In this dynamic, Benhabib writes, "I confirm not only your 'humanity' but your human 'individuality'" (ibid).[15] Benhabib's feminist conception of the concrete other suggests a society where an individual may encounter an-other, recognize in them their difference, and engage in social relations rooted in that difference.[16]

A politics of diversity insists that each, rooted in difference, not only be actively encouraged to participate, but to engage actively with the "others" and to genuinely consider their contributions.[17] The Liberal view, however, suggests an individual who faces an "other," and when that other does not conform to his--actually particular--view of humanity, he will recognize difference but understand it as a threatening mutation. What becomes of the Hobbesian man who invariably confronts such threats in the course of his life? He is forced into an exaggerated concern for and reliance on his own self, and it is from here that we begin to understand the social context that generates narrowly self-interested men.

The Hobbesian man is a singular and isolated unit, a bundle of

particular, or narrow, interests. This man, like any other, will have to take action in order to sustain his life. But he lives in a world where everyone who is not he, who is different, is a threat. As he perceives these others as a threat to his survival, he is, therefore, forced into an intense concern for his self and well being. As he will not be able to trust others to help him meet his needs, he is forced into absolute self-reliance. What is this overly self-concerned and self-reliant Hobbesian man, if he is not the narrowly, self-interested building block of a modern interest group Liberalism?

That some of us might not fear difference, or may come to appreciate diversity, is ignored in classical Liberal theory. Contemporary group theory, with it Liberal assumption of narrow self-interest, then, is founded exclusively on the experience of those who do fear difference. But we must also look closely at how the narrow and self interested man becomes "selfish," a threat to the common good. To do so, and to understand more fully how the notion of a general will which is opposed to these narrow self interests has been formulated to justify political systems based on a closed public space, we must turn to the establishment of the social contract. In doing so we will demystify one of the central paradoxes of Liberal thought.

The Common Good: Selfish Interests and the Ruling Class[18]

It is an interesting paradox of the Liberal formula that the narrow and conflicting interests of Hobbesian men result in a primary common interest. The dilemma of modernity for a Liberal is that when each of us pursues what we want, our narrow selfish interests, we end up in a situation which none of us want.[19] Hobbes asserts that the lives lived by these overly self-concerned and self-reliant individual men, always alone fighting off the enemy, is a wretched and unstable life. This is life in the state of nature; it is conceived of as a war of each against all. In order better to guarantee that our interests will be secured, we each have a stake in creating a less wretched and more stable arrangement. Hobbesian philosophy posits the erection of a sovereign authority through social contract as a solution to this condition.[20] We will all then have a common interest in submitting our rights and freedoms to a higher power who will help, as Locke says, to "avoid, and remedy those inconveniences of the state of nature" (1980, 48), such as alleviating the strain of our extreme self-reliance and self-concern.

It is the argument of this paper that the notion of a common interest has traditionally been used to create and justify a closed public space by stifling the needs and participation of non-dominant groups.[21] To begin to unmask the problematic of this Liberal postulation of the common interest we must remember a few things. First, Locke reminds us that "absolute monarchs are but men" (1980, 12). Moreover, as both Hobbes and Locke suggest, the sovereign may in fact be a body of men. Finally, the history of Liberalism has shown us that, in reality, this body of men is merely comprised of and represents a certain class of men.

Locke is most explicit on this point; he repeatedly asserts that the aim of civil society and the sovereign is the protection of private property. In Locke's scheme there is already an inequality of property by the time people form a civil society. Thus, the real aim of civil society is to protect that unequal distribution of property. In the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Rousseau critically addresses this sentiment when he writes that "the first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society" (1973, 76).

Rousseau's critique shows us the bias of the justification of the Liberal common interest. Rousseau asserts that such a state of uncertainty, which Hobbes posits plagued the pre-civil society, was mostly the predicament of the wealthy: he writes that "the rich, in particular must have felt how much they suffered by a constant state of war, of which they bore all the expense; and in which, though all risked their lives, they alone risked their property" (ibid, 88). Here, Rousseau suggests that the rich knew that their property was merely usurpation and that this contributed to their insecurity.

On this point, we find that Liberal philosophers expose themselves. For example, Locke himself asserts that slavery is a crime and that when the government loses the trust of the people by alienating their rights/property, the people may revolt (1980, 78). Yet, we know that Locke acknowledged that some would not have these rights/property: he mentions specifically servants, women, children and even in some cases full slaves. By Locke's own logic, free propertied men would be subject to the threat from the legitimate right of women, children and servants/slaves to revolt. Rousseau is clear on this point, in the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality he writes, "[the rich] knew they were founded on precarious and false titles; so that, if others took from them by force what they themselves had gained by force, they would have no reason to complain" (1973, 88). Liberal philosophy, on behalf of the propertied class, must posit a way out of these unfavorable circumstances.

Thus, commenting on the Hobbesian and Lockean solution of setting up a sovereign, Rousseau writes,

> the rich man, thus urged by necessity, conceived at length the profoundest plan that ever entered the mind of man: this was to employ in his favour the forces of those who attacked him, to make allies of his adversaries, to inspire them with different maxims, and to give them other institutions as favourable to himself as the law of nature was unfavourable (ibid, 88-9).

The clever institution which the rich man suggested was the "collect[ion of our forces] in a supreme power which may govern us" (ibid), i.e. the sovereign, or modern Liberal government. The clever maxims used in the argument were that this supreme power would govern us "by wise laws, protect and defend all the members

of the association, repulse common enemies, and maintain eternal harmony among us" (ibid). It would do this by "guarding the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious" (ibid) by rules of justice based on equal submission.[22] But Rousseau points out that the fallacy of such maxims promising protection and equity becomes apparent when we realize that their point is to "secure to everyman the possession of what belongs to him," in a system which is brought into a society already plagued by an inequality of possession.

Thus, an appeal to the "common interest" has been merely a ruse for maintaining inequality for the benefit of a "particular interest." To Hobbes, man is born in a state of perfect freedom.[23] It is this freedom that we curtail under the sovereign. We are led to believe that we will be better off for this submission, as this state of perfect freedom, where men are motivated by their narrow self-interest, has become a state of war. We are thus told that our freedom must be stifled for the common good.[24]

However, what if we understand the people's motivation as merely seeking to meet their needs (even an early postulation in Hobbes and Locke), rather than to satisfy their interests? It may be true that men have these selfish interests, but it is absolutely true that all people have needs. This distinction is important because although we often argue that people ought not to be able to pursue freely their unbridled selfish interests, it would be more difficult to argue directly that people ought not be able to meet their needs. Even Liberalism begins with an assertion that, just by being born, man has a right to have his needs met (Locke 1980, 18). With this in mind, the notion of giving up our freedom becomes a bit more problematic.

In Liberal philosophy, man's natural freedom *includes* his freedom or power to meet his basic needs (ibid). Yet, this power, like all the others except the ultimate power of one's very life, gets relinquished to the sovereign. Now that we have seen that the sovereign is constituted by and designed to protect a certain class of people, we find that in society "everyone" has relinquished their basic abilities, to meet even their subsistence needs, to a "particular class." After such a submission, the *many* do not even have the power to meet their basic needs, and the *few* of this particular class end up with all the power in society. Under the guise of the "common good" we end up with a system that precludes most people from entering the public sphere to struggle to meet their needs and is thus able both to establish and to guarantee enormous inequality.[25]

When a universal-type common interest is seen as somehow above or transcending the particular, the particular is seen as opposed to the universal. Those who insist on pursuing their particular perspective are labelled threatening, and the sovereign is justified in squelching their attempts. It is now clear that such an appeal has been used to justify discrimination, barriers to participation in the public discourse, against anyone not able to accommodate themselves to society, i.e.: by nature people like women.

Section Conclusion:

In conclusion, we see that by appealing to our fear of difference, Hobbesian philosophy makes a case for the wretched situation in the state of nature. Through fear of difference, the Hobbesian man is forced to be narrowly self interested. This, however, results in an obstacle to meeting his needs, and he is left in a war of each man against all. Such men will find that they have a common interest then in submitting to a sovereign, and any one still trying to express their natural freedom--or resisting the sovereign--will be seen as a threat to that common interest and suffer the sovereign's all powerful wrath.

We have seen, however, that by laying down our rights to the sovereign under the guise of a common interest, we are relinquishing our power to take care of our own needs. We are investing a government, made by and for a particular class, with the ability to define and meet our needs, from the point of view and in the service of this particular class. Thus, the call made in Liberal philosophy, and assumed in contemporary group theory, for a common interest that is not attentive to the needs of us all, identified and expressed in our own voices, is a call to an exclusionary and stifling politics.

We must now turn to a closer examination of what happens to these needs, that even Liberalism claims are legitimate, in group theory that could allow some to be subordinated. To do so, we must now turn to Marx.

Part Two

Interests, Needs and Group Theory that Can Ignore Discrimination:

Let us step back a moment to examine more closely just how, in Liberal group theory, the diversity of our particular and basic needs have come to be seen as (narrow-self) interests. What manner of "conjuring tricks" have our political theorists employed to achieve this transformation? In this section we will address Marx's understanding of the abstraction involved in the bourgeois process of commodification, and use this to analyze the consequences of the way in which, in a Liberal democracy, the very "stuff" of politics is understood as these interests--as assumed as early on as Madison's writings--rather than being needs and aspirations or assuring that people's dignity will be respected. We will see that this type of group theory will ensure the failure of politics to create a public space of authentic conversation and struggle in which fundamental problems of the system may be addressed, resulting in a system which can justify meeting the needs of some groups more readily than others.

Commodification and a Needs-Based Critique of Interest Politics:

In Liberal group theory, the stuff of politics is understood as interests which get expressed as selfish demands; the goal of politics, then, is to mediate between them. In contrast to a

Liberal politics based on interests, we might remember Marx's famous maxim from The Critique of the Gotha Program, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (in McLellan 1987, 569). Thus, as Ollman writes, for Marx, "the immediate aim of all communist planning...is the satisfaction of 'social needs'" (1979, 63). In this conception, people's concrete needs are acknowledged as legitimate and central to the objective of social organization. Here, meeting our needs is the point of politics. One of Marx's major contributions toward this end has been to remind us of the concrete material conditions which actually form the social base.[26] As part of his critique of capitalism, however, Marx points out that in bourgeois society this concrete material base becomes "estranged" in the "illusory forms in which the real struggles" occur within the State (in McLellan 1979, 161). In Liberal democracy, Marx views the political realm of the State as an "illusory community." Within Liberal group theory, then, we find that concrete need comes to be seen in an estranged version referred to as interests in, as Marx notes in the Communist Manifesto, the bourgeois move to commodify and profane everything.[27]

In The German Ideology, Marx writes of the problem of commodities,

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour (in Tucker 1978, 319).

However, using the example of a table, Marx continues,

...for all that, the table continues to be that common, every-day thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than 'table-turning' ever was (ibid, 320).

Thus, drawing on Marx's understanding of how the process of commodification transforms a concrete "common every-day thing," we can understand how group theorists treat needs, the very "stuff" of politics. Liberal group theory commodifies needs, transforming them into "something transcendent," abstract. In this process, the

content of politics is translated from the concrete conditions of people's lives into an abstraction, as when the table of Marx's example steps forth as a commodity. This is problematic because once our needs are translated into these bourgeois abstractions, they can be traded like other commodities. As noted, even in Liberal theory, human needs as needs are incontestable. But, when our needs are seen as interests, they can be negotiated. This bourgeois process of abstraction, in its commodification of everything, serves to negate the inviolability of human needs and dignity. It is precisely at this moment, through the abstraction, that the point of social organization ceases to be the meeting of people's concrete needs. With such an abstraction, the goal of politics becomes obscured. Instead we fall into our present habit of bargaining amongst interests, a process which is divorced from the authentic social pursuit of collectively meeting our needs.

We can now see how a politics based on a mythic common good can justify inequality among particulars. In Liberal group theory, particular interests can (and actually are supposed to be) subordinated at various points in the political process. When we are reminded that at the root of interests are legitimate needs, we can name this subordination as oppressive (as the denial of legitimate claims). Drawing on the critique offered earlier, that it is actually one dominant class which constitutes the standard for the common good, we can see that group theory which bases the very stuff of politics in "interests" uses this abstraction of need in the service of discrimination against non-dominant groups.

As Marx wrote,

the State, divorced from the real interests [sic] of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration--such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests--and especially...on classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others (ibid, 160).

As our society is already based in inequality, such an estrangement serves to perpetuate this relationship by denying authentic struggle by all peoples its legitimate place in the sphere of politics.

The Effect of "Interests" in Contemporary Groups Scholarship:

Through a set of arguments concerning the Liberal abstraction of needs into interests, modern group scholars have updated Madison's notion of a public sphere that virtually denies the possibility of authentic conversation and real struggle. Bentley began in 1908 to develop the pluralist paradigm which, by basing itself on "special interests," would make it very difficult to see the points of contention experienced by the varieties of people and

groups, whose appropriate place to be figured out is the political realm. Given group theory's Liberal reliance on self-interest, it continues to distance itself from a discussion of concrete needs, aspirations and dignity because these interests are only recognizable once groups successfully organize to bargain for them.

In The Process of Government (1908), Bentley equates interests themselves with the groups that organize to represent them. We must note, however, that he takes the equation even one step further by equating groups themselves with their overt activity, as he writes "group and group activity are equivalent terms" (1908, 214). Bentley can then perform the identity equation of interest with manifest group activity, as he writes, "[T]he interest I put forward is a specific group interest in some definite course of conduct or activity" (ibid).

By rooting his discussion in interests, and equating them with overt group activity, Bentley further masks the bias of our system in which the needs of some can be overlooked. Criticizing Bentley's identity equation, Balbus writes,

If the political process is nothing but overt group activity, and if interests are manifested solely through overt group activity, then it is logically impossible to say that certain interests are being ignored, distorted, or discriminated against in the policy making process (1971, 158).[28]

Thus, by equating interests with overt group activity, Bentley completely obscures need, or politics as the process of multi-layered needs interpretation and fulfillment. Moreover, if we are left with no way to see these problems through politics, we certainly will not be able to develop a process designed to struggle through them.

Truman, who saw his own work as an "elaboration" and "extension" of Bentley's (Truman 1951, ix), contributes to this bias of group based theory. Although both Bentley and Truman identify what they call "potential" interests (Bentley 1908, 227), it is through their actual (non)treatment of these potential interests[29] that these, and later, group theorists further succeed in removing the scholarly discussion of the role of groups in politics from the possibility of an authentic politics.[30] Although pluralists bring up the notion that there are groups yet unformed, they tend not to treat the circumstances of these potential groups within their theory.

Later pluralists such as Dahl (1961), Polsby (1963), and Banfield (1961), continue to focus only on organized groups. This "leads one to presume that the conversion of potential groups to interest groups is in fact non-problematical" (Balbus 1971, 160). Balbus points out, for example, that Dahl asserts that "all 'significant' preferences will become political issues" (1961, 162). The politics of constructing "significant" interests, especially in a system without a secure and open public space but

which is instead characterized by inequality, should be obvious:[31] it is precisely at this point, where needs must be converted into interests in our system even in order to begin to be met, that the pluralist conceptual promise of equality breaks down in reality.[32]

Instead of only seeing interest--an abstraction of the assertion of need--once it is made manifest in group activity, a focus on the process in which potential groups might come to consciousness and enter the public political arena could help focus discussion on how groups come to understand their own needs and seek to meet them. It could tell us of the process whereby needs are converted into abstractions--interests--and the obstacles to their representation. It could provide a critique of the current political process in which dialogue is stifled, enabling the pursuit of alternatives based on such a critique.[33] Instead, by focusing only on organized groups, groups which have already "made it" onto the agenda, pluralists mask the bias of a system that keeps certain groups unorganized and/or unheard in politics further contributing to this politics of silencing.[34]

A number of critical scholars have attempted to rectify this bias of group theory. For example, Cobb and Elder (1972) show that being part of public debate, in terms of getting on the agenda, is an important point in a discriminatory process. Bacharatz and Baratz (1962) point out the role of "nondecision-making," noting that preventing decisions from being made on potential issues is a key point in the political process. Steven Lukes (1974) suggests a third face of power. Lukes introduces the consideration of "latent conflict," which he writes, "consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the 'real interests' of those they exclude" of which those excluded may not even be conscious (1974, 24-25).

Taking one final step back in the process, in "Talking about Needs: Interpretive Contests as Political Conflicts in Welfare-State Societies," Fraser identifies the interpretation of needs themselves as a site of struggle.[35] She points out two important problems of this process of the conversion of needs into "significant preferences" even before the moment of struggle over their satisfaction. These are "the struggle to validate the need as a matter of legitimate political concern" and "the struggle over the interpretation of the need, the struggle for the power to define it and, so, to determine what would satisfy it" (in Sunstein 1990, 162).

We thus see that by treating the stuff of politics as interests (that is, constructs which obscure the purpose of politics from meeting people's needs), group theorists are able to gloss over systematic barriers to the creation of an authentic public space. Traditional interest group theory does not honestly acknowledge and grapple with the role of groups in such a political process. Group theory must confront this situation where, as Ackelsberg writes,

in treating people as mere bearers of interests, liberal democratic individualism masks structures of power and, in particular,

relations of domination and subordination that affect people (and structure their 'interests') as members of subnational collectivities (1991, 180).

Section Conclusion:

Recalling the argument made earlier in this article, we remember that the common good is merely the "good of a particular class": anyone, group, or community with differing needs is seen as a threat to it. The public discourse becomes constituted in such a way as to prevent these threatening voices from participation in the exchange. Thus, for a politics of needs to be more egalitarian than one based in ideologically constructed interests, it must be rooted in diversity, striving to overcome the fears of difference we have learned under our present system.

The respect for and fostering of diversity are essential to the development of a more authentic politics--even when we strive to re-make that politics needs-based--because within our present context, as Fraser reminds us, even needs-talk can result in further inequality if it is not conscious of who is doing the interpreting, in what sort of power structure and to what ends. If we "take for granted that the socially authorized forms of public discourse[36] available for interpreting people's needs are adequate and fair," Fraser writes, then we will

occlude the question whether these forms of public discourse are skewed in favor of the self-interpretation and interests of dominant social groups and, so, work to the disadvantage of subordinate or oppositional groups (in Sunstein 1990, 162).

If, as Marx wrote, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (The German Ideology, in Tucker 1978, 172), then we must remember that in politics interpretations developed by non-dominant groups must be brought up in counter-hegemonic fashion into the political process. Through that process these interpretations will likely develop and change as the previously non-dominant groups re-discover their histories and find their own voices in contemporary context. Thus, for a transformation to a politics which is affirmingly attentive to people's needs to achieve broader inclusiveness--equality in a more open public sphere--this transformation must be accompanied by a corresponding change from a process rooted in sameness to one open to difference. We thus must move from our current understanding of the "common" good to a "particularly" constituted discourse whose intent is to foster groups' access to their own and to broader social resources, collective memory and deliberative space in the process of politics. Such a politics will need to be dynamic and flexible if it is to encourage and respond to these ever changing social processes.

Conclusion

Political groups, those organizations which represent particular interests, are then understood as "special" interest groups. Since Bentley, these special interest groups have been seen as the basic unit of American politics. Political groups organized by sub-communities seeking to have their needs met, aspirations fulfilled and dignity cared for, are perceived instead as individual men in the Liberal view, as defending their narrow selfish interests at the expense of common good. Thus, from the perspective of the interest group literature, politics is about regulating the activity and interaction of these narrow selfish entities.[37] Liberal politics is about limiting public deliberation and praxis to the management of conflict by allocating and protecting divisible rewards.[38]

Such a conception of politics has been based in an expectation of homogeneity and has led, in practice, to the stifling of those named different from a dominant paradigm. Inclusion into the present system, however, cannot succeed in satisfying the particular concerns of non-dominant sub-communities. Inclusion within current norms of relationship in our political system, even if we were able to shift the mode of discourse from interests to needs, tend to "normalize" those engaged in more concrete and/or radical appeals (Fraser, in Sunstein 1990, 175). These "different" groups will only be able to fully participate in the existing system if they drop their "special" characteristics (or are cured of their disease à la founding father Benjamin Rush!) and act like the dominant group.

In response to the experience of those excluded and oppressed in the current system based in "sameness" and fear of difference, women of color in particular[39] have stressed the need for a system that not only "tolerates difference" but actively encourages diversity. As Ackelsberg writes, "Those who are now finding strength in their identities as members of one or more of these collectivities are rightly unwilling to abandon them as the price of fully inclusive citizenship" (1991, 180). She writes that we need a new reconceptualization, which "must recognize people not as bearers of interests, but as participants in a variety of communities that contribute important components to their identity" (ibid). In working towards a politics that is multiculturally needs-based we are not guaranteed that we will be able to reconstitute the public space, but it can be at least a first step. For, as has been argued in this work, we need a politics where individuals and communities can engage in conversation and struggle to identify and meet their changing needs with affirmation and dignity.

Endnotes

1. In the above quote Madison mentions both passion and interest. Although this work will analyze the term "interests" critically, it should be noted that interest was viewed favorably by thinkers by the seventeenth century as a rational improvement over motivation by irrational passions (Holmes, in Mansbridge 1990).

2. For an intellectual history of self-interest see Mansbridge (in Mansbridge 1990). The collection of essays in the Mansbridge anthology provide a much needed contribution to the debate over self-interest by focusing on the tension between self-interest and altruism. This work, however, will treat the assumptions and obfuscations related to self-interest itself.

3. In 1963 Norman Jacobson wrote of the link (and its implications) between the political education of the founding fathers and the political science of contemporary groups scholars. He argued that the authors of the Constitution framed a political system which would effectively mold citizens into the perfect specimens of contemporary political science. The following article builds on and develops Jacobson's thesis by more closely analyzing the Liberal roots of group theory especially in light of the developments of the past thirty years of groups scholarship in American political science (Jacobson 1963).

4. Others have suggested that we understand interests as "preferences" (Mansbridge 1983; Young 1990). Marxists often discuss the difference between subjective and objective interests (Balbus 1971; Lukes 1974), or need in biological terms, and interest as the situation created to satisfy those needs. Although the term "interests" has these various connotations, in this work it will be treated in the way it is used in the interest group literature as a selfish abstraction of need.

5. See numbers ten and fifty-one, for example.

6. See, for example, the published letters between Abigail and John Adams concerning the status of women in the new republic (in Scott, 1982).

7. See Young (in Sunstein 1990).

8. This is not to say that each of these different groups will have a singular voice. For example, as Ackelsberg and Diamond point out, the diversity of feminist discourses itself has suggested to feminist theorists that the goal of developing an alternative is not necessarily toward an "all-inclusiveness" of a paradigm, but that it may be differences themselves which constitute the alternative (1987, 520).

9. Young further helps us to see how this subordination has been achieved in our functioning political system. She writes that it can do so because "a general will that transcends the particular differences of group affiliation, situation, and interest has in practice excluded groups judged not capable of adopting that general point of view" (in Sunstein 1990, 118). This was achieved, as Young writes, through early American republicans defining "moral, civilized republican life in opposition to this backward looking, uncultivated desire that they identified with women and nonwhites" (ibid, 122) and the non-propertied class.

10. Note, for example, Hobbes' well known appeal:

...if a man does not believe me let him therefore consider with himselfe, when taking a journey, he arms himself and seeks to go accompanied...Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words (1983, 187)?

11. For a view of difference and diversity in this vein see feminist works such as Starhawk (1982).

12. For example, on women see Pateman (1988) and Lloyd (1984); on Jews see Avineri (1981) and Hertzberg (1959); on the non-propertied see Young (in Sunstein 1990).

13. See also Flanagan and Jackson "Justice, Care and Gender: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Debate Revisited" (in Sunstein 1990).

14. Rawls is also criticized for positing a theory of justice which is blind to difference with the same actual effect of ignoring the difference of women and other non-dominant groups (see Young in Sunstein 1990, 124; and Okin, in Sunstein 1990). See also Gilligan's (1982) feminist critique and Dietz (1985) and Ackelsberg and Diamond (1987) for a discussion of some of the problems with this type of feminist critique. Although I utilize Rousseau's critique of Hobbes and Locke, it should also be noted that he too has a tendency to ignore the particular in discussions of the general will (see Young's critique, in Sunstein 1990, 119, and her critique of later participatory democrats such as Barber, 123-5).

15. This idea is also found in anarchist thought. See for example Kropotkin (1987).

16. This contemporary feminist conception reflects Buber's communalist vision. In Paths in Utopia, Buber affirms

the need of man to feel his own house as a room in a greater house, other inhabitants of it with whom he lives and works are all acknowledging and confirming his individual existence (1949, 140).

Here Buber is calling up a vision in which the needs and

contributions of individual difference are affirmed in general social experience.

17. The work of Jewish feminist theologian Judith Plaskow (1991) represents such a philosophy.

18. This section explores the role of property and class in the formulation of the Liberal understanding of the common good. Hobbes and Locke had slightly different understandings of these two phenomena. For Locke there is already an inequality of property before we form the social contract, whereas one could argue that there can be no property at all in the Hobbesian state of nature (it is too unstable). That government is instituted for the protection of private property, thus institutionalizing inequality, is made more explicit therefore in Locke but is implicit in Hobbes' theory. Although Hobbes notes a kind of equality in pre-civil society, he did not necessarily perceive it as a good thing, for it contributed to the chaos. In the effort to regain stability through the social contract, similarly to Locke, Hobbes sought to legitimize and protect the ruling class. By relying on the Rousseauian critique, Hobbes and Locke are brought together in the following argument to explicate the myth of the common good in classical Liberal theory. As the reader will note, Rousseau's arguments apply to both Hobbes and Locke.

19. Derived from Hobbes' conception of the state of nature, contemporary scholars explore this paradox in game theory, with the "prisoner's dilemma" as the most classic example. Attributed to A.W. Tucker, see Rawls (1971, 269) for a concise description.

20. See also Locke (1980, 66).

21. Many have made this argument before. For recent discussions, see for example Ackelsberg (1991) and Young (in Sunstein 1990).

22. See also Locke (1980, 75).

23. See also Locke (1980, 46).

24. See also Locke (1980, 67).

25. For others' discussion on this issue, see for example Ackelsberg (1991, 178), Marx's On the Jewish Question, and Macpherson (1962).

26. Marx makes a similar argument to what follows in the Preface to The Critique of Political Economy (in McLellan 1987), in terms of base and superstructure. I have chosen to represent his contribution, however, with his argument of the "illusory community" as presented in The German Ideology, as I feel that this reading is less deterministic and thus more helpful to the general thesis of article.

27. See Marshall Berman (1982) for commentary on this.

28. See also Myron Hale, "The Cosmology of Arthur F. Bentley," (in Connolly 1969, 35-50).

29. See Balbus (1971) on this point, especially pp. 159-161.

30. I use the term "authentic" here to include the role of groups similarly to the way Berman (1970) uses it for individuals.

31. See also Bachrach and Baratz (1962) for a critical perspective on Dahl's bias in defining "key political issues." See also the way Dahl suggests that we recognize something as an issue in the first place (1961, 90-95).

32. Balbus makes clear, however, that the problem with the pluralist approach concerning interests is not simply the failure of particular scholars to follow through empirically on a study of potential groups (1971, 163). Despite potential problems with Balbus' notion of objective interests, his distinction between objective and subjective interests is particularly useful here to show a fundamental bias of the pluralist concept of interests. A subjective interest, according to Balbus, is akin to a preference; it is known by the subject. This is contrasted to an objective interest which may not be known by the subject but implies that one has a "stake in it" or is "'affected by' it" (ibid, 152). It is Balbus' assertion that pluralists only recognize subjective interests, and this contributes to the inadequacy of both the normative and explanatory power of their theory. By only recognizing subjective interests, Balbus asserts, pluralists are "able to define away a central normative problem and a major potential objection to the American political system" (ibid, 164).

33. Critical group theorists Bachrach and Baratz (1962) make some clear recommendations for the methodology of such a research project.

34. Classic critiques of the upper class bias of pluralism may be found in Lowi (1969) and Schattschneider (1960).

35. See also Fraser (1987).

36. For example, Fraser (in Sunstein 1990) discusses distinctions between various political, economic, and domestic spheres through reprivatization discourses which currently use needs-talk to justify oppressions. See also Fraser (1987).

37. For the Marxist formulation of this critique, see Balbus (1971, 167).

38. See Young's clarification of the distributive paradigm (1990).

39. See, for example, Lorde (1984), and Hooks (1984).

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